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**To:** Microsoft ATR  
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**Subject:** Make Microsoft Play Fair

I recently upgraded my home-office PC's operating system to Windows XP. The OS itself so far seems to be very robust: an excellent product. This is where my praise of the new operating system ends.

Did you know that when you purchase the Windows XP upgrade and then try to set up your internet connections, you are almost FORCED to choose the Microsoft Network for your Internet service provider? Ok, perhaps "forced" is a strong word. Let me put it to you this way. I've been an Internet user for almost 10 years. When setting up Windows XP to work with my internet provider, the ONLY option presented to me for browsing the Web was the MSN Explorer. Upon clicking on this option, I am brought to the Microsoft Network signup wizard. I did NOT want to sign up for Microsoft Network. After searching through the programs in the "Start" menu, I found what I actually wanted. Microsoft Explorer. Fortunately, I knew what I was after and looked for it. I can't help but wonder what a first-time user would have done. I should note that both Windows Explorer and Windows Outlook Express (for E-Mail & Newsgroups) are built into Windows. There is no option to use other products. While there ARE ways to avoid having these applications installed with Windows, or to remove them later, it is not done easily.

There is no doubt that Microsoft Windows IS the dominant operating system. I've tried other operating systems (IBM OS/2 and several versions of LINUX) and have been forced to return to Windows due to the lack of applications available for the other Operating Systems. In my opinion, this is a "Chicken or the Egg" conundrum, and not something I have the knowledge to solve.

However, what I DO know is that Microsoft makes is VERY difficult to use Non-Microsoft products with its operating system. Prove this fact to yourself. Give a novice user a computer with a blank hard drive, bootable CD-ROM drive and ISP information, along with the retail version of Windows XP Home Edition. The user's assignment: Set up Windows XP, and then sign onto the internet.

How to solve this problem? Microsoft should be broken up into 3 parts.  
1) The operation system division. 2) Applications Division. 3) Internet Services Division.

This would stop Microsoft from using its virtual monopoly in the OS market to force users into using other Microsoft products. It would restore free and fair competition to the Applications market. Perhaps the newly independent Applications division would create versions of former Microsoft products for LINUX and other operation systems. The

newly created Internet Services Division would now have to compete head-to-head with AOL, Earthlink, etc. (a fight, I suspect, they would lose, but who knows).

The question is not and SHOULD not be, "Is this good for Microsoft?" but "Is this good for consumers and the technology sector in general?" The answer to the first question would be "possibly, possibly not." The answer to the second question is a resounding "YES."

Microsoft makes an excellent operation system today. (I don't know how they came to dominance with their Windows 9\* and ME products, they were horrible. But Windows NT/2000/XP operating systems are fantastic!) Some of their applications are top-notch and should be able to compete well with other vendors independent of Microsoft. Their Internet Services, well, that remains to be seen. I say these things so that you understand that I'm not of the radical "I Hate Microsoft" group. I simply want to see more options available to me.

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